

Received: 17 May 2018 | Accepted: 5 September 2018

DOI: 10.1111/1365-2664.13280

**POLICY DIRECTION**Journal of Applied Ecology 

# Riparian buffers in tropical agriculture: Scientific support, effectiveness and directions for policy

Sarah H. Luke<sup>1,2</sup>  | Eleanor M. Slade<sup>3,4</sup>  | Claudia L. Gray<sup>5</sup> | Kogila V. Annammala<sup>6</sup>  | Julia Drewer<sup>7</sup>  | Joseph Williamson<sup>8</sup>  | Agnes L. Agama<sup>9</sup> | Miklin Ationg<sup>10</sup> | Simon L. Mitchell<sup>1</sup>  | Charles S. Vairappan<sup>11</sup> | Matthew J. Struebig<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), School of Anthropology and Conservation, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK; <sup>2</sup>Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; <sup>3</sup>Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK; <sup>4</sup>Lancaster Environment Centre, University of Lancaster, Lancaster, UK; <sup>5</sup>Department of Life Sciences, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK; <sup>6</sup>Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Water Security (IPASA), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Malaysia; <sup>7</sup>Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), Edinburgh, UK; <sup>8</sup>School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK; <sup>9</sup>South East Asia Rainforest Research Partnership (SEARRP), Lahad Datu, Malaysia; <sup>10</sup>Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Water Resources Management Section, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia and <sup>11</sup>Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

**Correspondence**

Eleanor M. Slade  
Email: [eleanor.slade@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:eleanor.slade@zoo.ox.ac.uk)

**Funding information**

Newton Ungku-Omar Fund (British Council, and Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology), Grant/Award Number: 216433953; Natural Environment Research Council, Grant/Award Number: NE/K016407/1

Handling Editor: Tadeu Siqueira

**Abstract**

1. There is a weak evidence base supporting the effective management of riparian ecosystems within tropical agriculture. Policies to protect riparian buffers—strips of non-cultivated land alongside waterways—are vague and vary greatly between countries.
2. From a rapid evidence appraisal, we find that riparian buffers are beneficial to hydrology, water quality, biodiversity and some ecosystem functions in tropical landscapes. However, effects on connectivity, carbon storage and emissions reduction remain understudied. Riparian functions are mediated by buffer width and habitat quality, but explicit threshold recommendations are rare.
3. *Policy implications.* A one-size fits all width criterion, commonly applied, will be insufficient to provide all riparian functions in all circumstances. Context-specific guidelines for allocating, restoring and managing riparian buffers are necessary to minimise continued degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in tropical agriculture.

**KEYWORDS**

biodiversity, conservation set-aside, ecosystem function, environmental policy, riparian corridor, riparian reserve, river, water quality

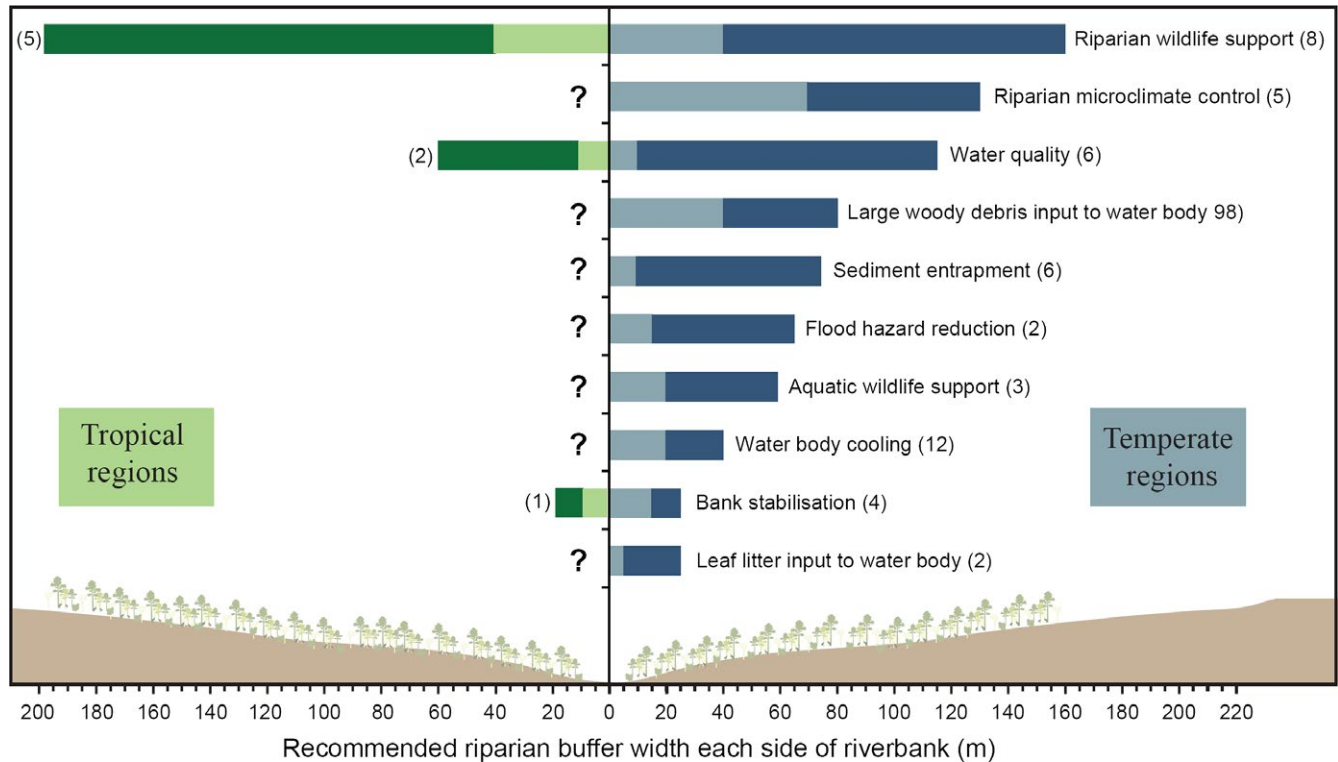
## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Conservation set-asides are an important strategy to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem functions in tropical agricultural landscapes.

Protected riparian areas, known as buffers, strips, margins, zones or reserves, are a typical set-aside strategy. They comprise natural non-converted habitat, actively restored natural habitat, or unmanaged areas (Barclay, Gray, Luke, & Turner, 2017).

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2018 The Authors. *Journal of Applied Ecology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Ecological Society.



**FIGURE 1** Minimum (light shading) and maximum (dark shading) riparian buffer widths recommended to protect riparian functions in temperate (evidence for North America in Collins et al., 2006) and tropical regions (material in this manuscript and Barclay et al., 2017). The number of studies on which the recommendations are based are in parentheses

Globally, most research on riparian buffers concerns hydrology, water quality and quantity (Allan, 2004; Mayer, Reynolds, McCutchen, & Canfield, 2007; Tabacchi et al., 2000). More recently, there has been a growing interest in provisions for biodiversity, landscape connectivity, and ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, carbon storage and emissions reduction (e.g. Marczak et al., 2010). However, the scientific evidence for these alleged benefits is often lacking and unavailable to policymakers and practitioners.

With the emergence of sustainability standards, and increased transparency in agribusiness and producer governments, there is a window of opportunity to inform policies in tropical countries. Strengthened protection of riparian buffers is attracting industry interest, particularly via crop certification schemes, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil; Fair Trade International, and Rainforest Alliance. As producers embrace demands for sustainability, it is timely to evaluate current riparian policies and the scientific evidence base available to inform them.

Riparian policies typically prescribe a minimum width for protection (Supporting Information Table S1). However, much of the research on the ecological impact of buffer width is from North America and Europe (Figure 1). Policies are absent or poorly defined in many tropical countries, particularly the emerging agricultural markets of Central Africa (Supporting Information Table S1). Where policies do exist in tropical countries, they can be vague, highly variable between and within countries, and often loosely based on information from other locations.

## 2 | ASSESSING THE TROPICAL EVIDENCE BASE

To assess the research and recommendations available for riparian buffers in tropical agriculture, we undertook a rapid evidence appraisal of the scientific literature (see Supporting Information Appendix S1). The search returned 847 publications. After including papers we knew had been missed by the search there were 265 studies that considered the impacts of tropical agriculture on riparian zones and waterways, of which 107 explicitly focussed on the effects of riparian buffers. Most of these 107 studies were from Brazil (31%), Malaysia (14%) and Costa Rica (11%) (Supporting Information Figure S1). Fifty per cent of the 107 studies considered terrestrial ecology, biodiversity and function; 30% hydrology and/or water quality; 18% covered freshwater ecosystems; 15% terrestrial connectivity; 11% agricultural ecosystem services and 4% carbon storage and emissions (some publications covered multiple themes). Below we summarise the current state of knowledge, drawing on examples from the 107 studies. Very few gave specific recommendations for buffer design or management, but where they did we report them.

### 2.1 | Hydrology and water quality

Riparian areas regulate rainfall and run-off into freshwaters, filter sediments and pollutants, stabilise riverbanks, maintain shading

and low water temperatures, and provide inputs of terrestrial organic matter such as wood, leaves, seeds and insects (Allan, 2004; Tabacchi et al., 2000). Protecting non-cultivated riparian buffers also mitigates flooding, sedimentation, and nutrient run-off in farmland (Mayer et al., 2007; Tabacchi et al., 2000).

In general, buffers with greater vegetation quality provide better hydrological benefits. Across multiple studies and tropical regions, high tree cover is associated with high levels of dissolved oxygen in rivers, and low levels of sediment (Heartsill-Scalley & Aide, 2003), sand (Luke, Barclay, et al., 2017), and disease-causing bacteria (Ragosta et al., 2011). In Malaysia, oil palm plantation streams with high riparian foliage cover are more shaded and cooler, and have more leaf litter (Chellaiah & Yule, 2018b; Luke, Barclay, et al., 2017). In mixed farmland of Nicaragua, buffers with higher leaf area index and decreased grazing intensity also have higher levels of water absorption and slower overall flow (Niemeyer, Fremier, Heinse, Chávez, & DeClerck, 2014). In contrast, the limited available evidence indicates greater forest cover may not directly result in greater nitrogen removal (Chaves et al., 2009; Connor, Nelson, Armour, & Hénault, 2013).

Landscape structure at larger spatial scales may outweigh the impact of localised riparian buffers. Forest quality and anthropogenic activities at the catchment scale were found to be important in both Malaysia and Brazil, particularly where buffer widths are <100 m (Luke, Barclay, et al., 2017; Mello, Randhir, Valente, & Vettorazzi, 2017). Subtle changes in road layouts or forest cover across a catchment can strongly influence run-off, sedimentation and water temperatures (Leal et al., 2016).

Conclusion: Riparian management policies should account for multiple scales from the riparian to catchment level. Once this is considered it is likely that protecting relatively narrow buffers (c. 5–10 m) will help regulate hydrology in tropical farmland (Figure 1).

## 2.2 | Freshwater biodiversity

Freshwater biodiversity is heavily affected by upstream and downstream areas as well as surrounding riparian habitat through the influence of nutrient inputs and microclimate (Pusey & Arthington, 2003). Although fish communities in agricultural streams with buffers are typically more similar to those in pristine forest than those without buffers (Giam et al., 2015; Lorion & Kennedy, 2009a), there are mixed effects on species richness, abundance, and biomass reported in the literature. For example, fish that use leaf litter and coarse substrate for hiding and foraging were found to be missing from oil palm rivers without buffers (Giam et al., 2015; Lorion & Kennedy, 2009a). As with water quality, fish diversity responds to both local stream and catchment level conditions, and may also depend on buffer widths (Leal et al., 2018; Tanaka, de Souza, Moschini, & Oliveira, 2016).

Freshwater invertebrates are central to aquatic food webs, contribute to decomposition and therefore support healthy freshwaters (Covich, Palmer, & Crowl, 1999). Macroinvertebrate composition and diversity in buffer-protected rivers is typically intermediate between that of pristine and agricultural sites, although there is notable variation between studies and crop types (Chellaiah & Yule, 2018a; Cunha, de Assis Montag, & Juen, 2015; Cunha & Juen, 2017; Lorion & Kennedy, 2009b; Luke, Dow, et al., 2017; Tanaka et al., 2016). Higher aquatic invertebrate diversity is associated with high levels of coarse particulate organic matter, coarse substrate, dissolved oxygen, low levels of slow-flowing “glide” habitat and ammonium concentrations (Chará-Serna, Chará, Giraldo, del Carmen Zúñiga, & Allan, 2015; Connolly, Pearson, & Pearson, 2016; Tanaka et al., 2016). Although land-use changes are known to reduce freshwater decomposition (Torres & Ramírez, 2014), there are no tropical studies examining the potential for buffers to improve them.

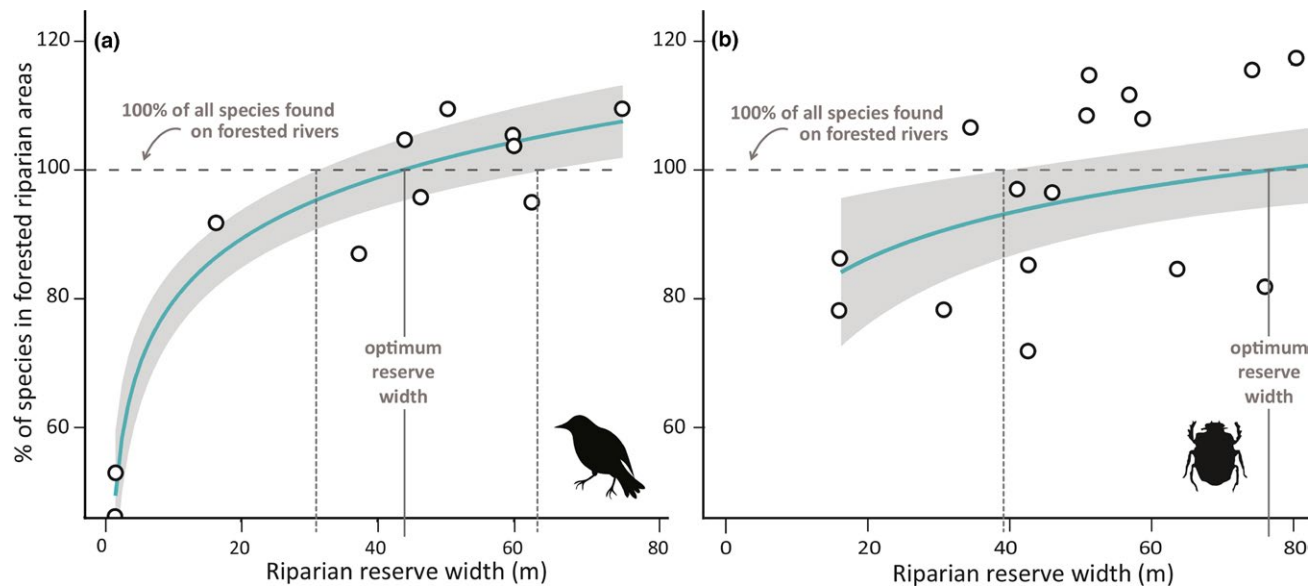
As with hydrological studies, freshwater research points to the benefits of retaining sufficient forest cover (e.g. >50%, Connolly et al., 2016) of sufficient quality (e.g. larger trees and greater vertical canopy structure, Tanaka et al., 2016) adjacent to rivers.

Conclusion: No studies gave explicit recommendations of riparian widths needed to help protect tropical freshwaters. This might be partly explained by the difficulty in distinguishing localised effectiveness of riparian buffers from confounding catchment-level effects (see Leal et al., 2018).

## 2.3 | Terrestrial biodiversity

Vegetation within riparian buffers tends to support more terrestrial biodiversity than surrounding farmland, and can, in some cases, support comparable diversity to riparian vegetation surrounded by continuous forest (e.g. mammals, Medina, Harvey, Merlo, Vilchez, & Hernández, 2007; birds, Mitchell et al., 2018; ants, Gray, Lewis, Chung, & Fayle, 2015; butterflies, Harvey et al., 2006). However, in many situations buffer biodiversity is intermediate between that found in farmland and continuous forest (e.g. mammals, Zimbres, Peres, & Machado, 2017; anurans, Konopik, Steffan-Dewenter, & Grafe, 2015; dung beetles, Gray, Slade, Mann, & Lewis, 2014). As can be expected from habitat degradation and fragmentation, the number of species supported is variable, with many being generalist, disturbance-, or matrix-tolerant taxa, particularly in narrow buffers (Keir, Pearson, & Congdon, 2015; Marczak et al., 2010; Metzger, Bernacci, & Goldenberg, 1997). Riparian zones may also support transient populations at particular times of the year, during extreme seasons or life stages (Keuroghlian & Eaton, 2008; Rodriguez-Mendoza & Pineda, 2010).

As habitat quality and tree species numbers are often greater in wider buffers (Lees & Peres, 2008; Metzger et al., 1997), it is difficult to discern the influence of forest structure on riparian biodiversity. For birds at least, more species are recorded in riparian areas



**FIGURE 2** The proportion of (a) bird and (b) dung beetle species found in riparian buffers of increasing width in oil palm plantations compared to riparian areas in nearby forest (figures redrawn from Mitchell et al., 2018 and Gray et al., 2017)

with a more even canopy profile (Lees & Peres, 2008), or greater above-ground biomass (Mitchell et al., 2018). For this reason, exclusion of cattle from riparian buffers has been recommended in Brazil (Mendoza et al., 2014), which leads to vegetation regeneration (Griscom, Griscom, & Ashton, 2009) and improved bird diversity (Lees & Peres, 2008).

Several studies have investigated the role of isolation from forest in structuring buffer communities. Notably, buffers near to large tracts of forest support larger bat populations (Galindo-González & Sosa, 2003), and more diverse dung beetle (Barlow et al., 2010) and bird assemblages (Keir et al., 2015; Lees & Peres, 2008). However, the long-term viability of terrestrial biodiversity in buffers remains open to question as edge effects may cause continual habitat degradation, and so the extent to which buffers act as ecological sinks is unclear (Beier & Noss, 1998).

In Brazil, riparian buffers of >60 m included both annually flooded and dry forest types, maintaining higher tree species diversity (Metzger et al., 1997). In pasture, widths >100–200 m for mammals, birds (Lees & Peres, 2008; Zimbres et al., 2017), and dung beetles (Barlow et al., 2010) are recommended. In oil palm in Borneo, minimum riparian widths of 40–100 m (either side of the river) for birds (Mitchell et al., 2018) and dung beetles (Gray, Slade, Mann, & Lewis, 2017) are suggested (Figure 2), while in sugarcane in Queensland, widths >90 m are needed to support forest specialist birds (Keir et al., 2015).

**Conclusion:** Positive associations exist between riparian buffer width and terrestrial tropical biodiversity. A buffer width of 100 m each side of the bank would help support multiple animal and tree taxa regardless of agricultural land use or geographic location.

## 2.4 | Landscape connectivity

Riparian buffers represent the essential connection between both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and can potentially connect habitat patches in fragmented landscapes. For example, forest antshrikes (Gillies & St. Clair, 2008), bats (Medina et al., 2007), peccaries (Keuroghlian & Eaton, 2008), sloths (Garcés-Restrepo, Pauli, & Peery, 2018), and dung beetles and moths (Gray, Slade, Chung, & Lewis, 2017) are known to use riparian buffers to move around agricultural-dominated landscapes. Buffers may also facilitate the spread of invasive species (Proches et al., 2005), although there are no studies that specifically address.

**Conclusion:** Only a few tropical studies have investigated the use of riparian buffers to increase landscape connectivity, with most focussing on single species. This is a key knowledge gap that is in critical need of further research to inform policy.

## 2.5 | Greenhouse gas balance

Depending on how they are managed, riparian buffers could exacerbate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (i.e. loss of carbon through continued degradation and erosion or by retaining nitrogen in soil as fertiliser run-off from farmland), and/or serve as stores of carbon in otherwise impoverished farmland (Brauman, Freyberg, & Daily, 2015; Descloux, Chanudet, Poilvé, & Grégoire, 2011; Kachenchart, Jones, Gajaseni, Edwards-Jones, & Limsakul, 2012; Masese, Salcedo-Borda, Gettel, Irvine, & McClain, 2017; Nagy et al., 2015; Wantzen et al., 2012). Carbon stocks in buffers surrounded by soya farms were similar to intact riparian areas in Amazonia (Nagy et al., 2015).

Similar trends were apparent in Borneo, although riparian carbon stocks were highly variable (Mitchell et al., 2018). Data from Brazil indicated that effective restoration of degraded riparian habitats could reverse high carbon losses associated with drainage and erosion, and result in a net increase of 70% carbon storage (Wantzen et al., 2012).

The effects of buffers on emissions is limited to a single study, which found similar N<sub>2</sub>O emissions in riparian forest and fertilised maize farms in the dry season, but higher emissions in the buffers in the wet season. However, the buffer still provided positive benefits such as reduced nitrogen inputs to freshwater (Kachenchart et al., 2012).

**Conclusion:** There are few empirical studies on the carbon dynamics of riparian buffers in tropical agriculture, and only one on the effects of buffers on GHG emissions. Further research is urgently needed.

## 2.6 | Agricultural services

Riparian buffer habitat could improve agricultural yields and production costs via pollination, pest control, decomposition, and water provision services; or agricultural productivity could fall due to increased exposure to pest and predators (Power, 2010; Zhang, Ricketts, Kremen, Carney, & Swinton, 2007). In Costa Rica, pollination rates in coffee farms decreased near riparian forest buffers compared to those by a non-riparian remnant (Ricketts, 2004). In Borneo, oil palm sites near and far from buffers had a similar diversity of ants and dung beetles, as well as similar levels of dung decomposition (Gray, Simmons, Fayle, Mann, & Slade, 2016), ant scavenging (Gray et al., 2015) and defoliating pests (Gray & Lewis, 2014). Moreover, the presence of forest remnants, including buffers, had little impact on oil palm yield in Borneo (Edwards, Edwards, Sloan, & Hamer, 2014).

**Conclusion:** Evidence for 'spillover' of diversity and services from riparian buffers is limited. However, there is likely a balance between services and disservices provided by buffers in tropical farmland.

## 3 | DIRECTIONS FOR SCIENCE AND POLICY

Although additional research on tropical riparian buffers is clearly needed, several policy-relevant conclusions can be made from the existing literature:

1. *Riparian buffers should be maintained and restored.* Sufficient evidence exists to confirm buffers improve water quality and hydrological processes, support biodiversity, and contribute to landscape-wide carbon storage in tropical farmland. However,

further studies are needed on connectivity, GHG balance and ecosystem service provision. As biodiversity, carbon storage, hydrology and water quality improve when vegetation heterogeneity, canopy cover and biomass in buffers are high, retaining natural vegetation in buffers is essential. Research exploring thresholds or tipping points of habitat quality effects on riparian functions is currently lacking, and would be informative for restoration.

2. *Wider buffers are better than narrow ones.* Effective buffer widths will vary by function (Figure 1). Currently, width thresholds are largely based on hydrology and water quality research, with guidelines usually recommending widths of 10–100 m (Supporting Information Table S1). However, biodiversity studies from Latin America and Southeast Asia indicate 40–200 m on each riverbank is needed, depending on the taxon studied, and whether the buffer is isolated within the agricultural matrix. Larger or wider-ranging species may require large buffer widths, and so decision trees that allow context-specific recommendations are needed.
3. *Catchment-level processes should be considered alongside riparian processes.* The effectiveness of buffers for aquatic functions can be confounded by how land is managed upstream. Similarly, the value of buffers for terrestrial biodiversity is linked to habitat availability over the broader landscape. Efforts should be made to protect habitat in stream headwaters, and the location of roads and agricultural activities should be carefully planned across whole catchments to maximise benefits. The relative roles of riparian- versus catchment-level land cover remains poorly understood, especially in the tropics, and studies that quantify variation on both these scales (Iñiguez-Armijos, Leiva, Frede, Hampel, & Breuer, 2014) will be very valuable to inform policy.

We suggest four critical components needed to implement effective riparian policies in tropical countries:

1. Clear buffer design protocols are needed to decide how much riparian habitat should be retained in tropical agriculture. A wide range of variables are assessed to determine riparian buffer widths in some temperate locations (Figure 1), and could form a basis for similar function-specific policies in the tropics, noting that a one size fits all width threshold is insufficient. For example, the High Carbon Approach (<http://highcarbonstock.org>) uses a decision tree incorporating patch area as a criterion for forest conversion, but could be expanded by incorporating minimum width thresholds for riparian buffers under varying contexts. Such decision-making tools should facilitate buffer design for the landscape in question, incorporating key factors (e.g. size of river, connectivity and matrix type) and automated computational processes. Examples include the Riparian Zone Estimator Tool (RipZET; <https://www.sfei.org/projects/ripzet>)
2. Rapid riparian survey protocols to assess and monitor buffer effectiveness should be developed using a suite of standard indicator species and functions. We suggest expanding existing toolkits, such as the forest integrity assessment tool



([www.hcvnetwork.org/resources/forest-integrity-assessment-tool](http://www.hcvnetwork.org/resources/forest-integrity-assessment-tool)) and the Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site-based Assessment (TESSA) (Peh et al., 2013), to riparian contexts.

3. Guidelines for rehabilitation and restoration of riparian areas in tropical agriculture are notably absent from the published literature, but sorely needed. Recent oil palm certification standards offer some suggestions (Barclay et al., 2017), and experiments in Sumatra are testing various approaches (<http://oilpalm biodiversity.com/>). The Riparian Ecosystem Restoration in Tropical Agriculture (RERTA) project provides a research design template that could be adapted and replicated in other countries and agricultural systems to allow informed guidelines at landscape-scales. We also suggest expanding on existing initiatives such as the Riparian Restoration Plant Database ([https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/rnre/Riparian\\_Restoration\\_Plant\\_Database.asp](https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/rnre/Riparian_Restoration_Plant_Database.asp))
4. Local technical support including capacity to map streams and land boundaries, expertise to help with monitoring and restoration, and schemes to increase policy awareness among land managers, are often lacking, meaning that riparian guidelines may fail to deliver benefits on the ground (Nunes et al., 2015). In addition to the open sharing of topographical data to accurately delimit watercourses, historical maps would be particularly useful to overcome shifting baselines, whereby deforested landscapes tend to lose perennial streams that could otherwise retain some functioning if buffered appropriately. Addressing this issue requires closer collaboration and improved data sharing between scientists, policy-makers, environmental managers and local practitioners to build local capacity, and to ensure that riparian science is translated into policy where it is needed most.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Newton-Ungku Omar Fund via the British Council and Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (216433953), and the UK Natural Environment Research Council (NE/K016407/1; <http://lombok.hmtf.info/>). We thank Jos Barlow, Jean Paul Metzger, Tadeu Siqueira, and an anonymous reviewer for useful feedback on the original text.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

M.J.S. and E.M.S. conceived the ideas, and planned the paper. S.H.L., E.M.S., K.V.A., J.D., J.W. reviewed the literature. S.H.L., E.M.S., C.L.G. and M.J.S. led the writing. All authors contributed to the drafts and approved the final manuscript.

## DATA ACCESSIBILITY

Data have not been archived because this article does not use data.

## ORCID

Sarah H. Luke  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8335-5960>

Eleanor M. Slade  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6108-1196>

Kogila V. Annammala  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9878-5672>

Julia Drewer  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6263-6341>

Joseph Williamson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4916-5386>

Simon L. Mitchell  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8826-4868>

Matthew J. Struebig  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2058-8502>

## REFERENCES

- Allan, J. D. (2004). Landscapes and riverscapes: The influence of land use on stream ecosystems. *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, 35, 257–284.
- Barclay, H., Gray, C. L., Luke, S. H., & Turner, E. (2017). RSPO Manual on Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the Management and Rehabilitation of Riparian Reserves.
- Barlow, J., Louzada, J., Parry, L., Hernández, M. I. M., Hawes, J., Peres, C. A., ... Gardner, T. A. (2010). Improving the design and management of forest strips in human-dominated tropical landscapes: A field test on Amazonian dung beetles. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 47, 779–788.
- Beier, P., & Noss, R. F. (1998). Do habitat corridors provide connectivity? *Conservation Biology*, 12, 1241–1252.
- Brauman, K. A., Freyberg, D. L., & Daily, G. C. (2015). Impacts of land-use change on groundwater supply: Ecosystem services assessment in Kona, Hawaii. *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, 141, A4014001.
- Chará-Serna, A. M., Chará, J., Giraldo, L. P., del Carmen Zúñiga, M., & Allan, J. D. (2015). Understanding the impacts of agriculture on Andean stream ecosystems of Colombia: A causal analysis using aquatic macroinvertebrates as indicators of biological integrity. *Freshwater Science*, 34, 727–740.
- Chaves, J., Neill, C., Germer, S., Gouveia Neto, S., Krusche, A. V., Castellanos Bonilla, A., & Elsenbeer, H. (2009). Nitrogen transformations in flowpaths leading from soils to streams in Amazon forest and pasture. *Ecosystems*, 12, 961–972.
- Chellaiah, D., & Yule, C. M. (2018a). Riparian buffers mitigate impacts of oil palm plantations on aquatic macroinvertebrate community structure in tropical streams of Borneo. *Ecological Indicators*, 95, 53–62.
- Chellaiah, D., & Yule, C. M. (2018b). Effect of riparian management on stream morphometry and water quality in oil palm plantations in Borneo. *Limnologia*, 69, 72–80.
- Collins, J. N., Sutula, M., Stein, E., Odaya, M., Zhang, E., & Larned, K. (2006). Comparison of methods to map California riparian areas. Final report prepared for the California Riparian Habitat Joint Venture.
- Connolly, N. M., Pearson, R. G., & Pearson, B. A. (2016). Riparian vegetation and sediment gradients determine invertebrate diversity in streams draining an agricultural landscape. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 221, 163–173.
- Connor, S., Nelson, P. N., Armour, J. D., & Hénault, C. (2013). Hydrology of a forested riparian zone in an agricultural landscape of the humid tropics. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 180, 111–122.
- Covich, A. P., Palmer, M. A., & Crowl, T. A. (1999). The role of benthic invertebrate species in freshwater ecosystems. *BioScience*, 49, 119–128.
- Cunha, E. J., de Assis Montag, L. F., & Juen, L. (2015). Oil palm crops effects on environmental integrity of Amazonian streams and Heteropteran (Hemiptera) species diversity. *Ecological Indicators*, 52, 422–429.

- Cunha, E. J., & Juen, L. (2017). Impacts of oil palm plantations on changes in environmental heterogeneity and Heteroptera (Gerromorpha and Nepomorpha) diversity. *Journal of Insect Conservation*, 21, 111–119.
- De Mello, K., Randhir, T. O., Valente, R. A., & Vettorazzi, C. A. (2017). Riparian restoration for protecting water quality in tropical agricultural watersheds. *Ecological Engineering*, 108, 514–524.
- Descoux, S., Chanudet, V., Poilvé, H., & Grégoire, A. (2011). Co-assessment of biomass and soil organic carbon stocks in a future reservoir area located in Southeast Asia. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 173, 723–741.
- Edwards, F. A., Edwards, D. P., Sloan, S., & Hamer, K. C. (2014). Sustainable management in crop monocultures: The impact of retaining forest on oil palm yield. *PLoS ONE*, 9, e91695.
- Galindo-González, J., & Sosa, V. J. (2003). Frugivorous bats in isolated trees and riparian vegetation associated with human-made pastures in a fragmented tropical landscape. *The Southwestern Naturalist*, 48, 579–589.
- Garcés-Restrepo, M. F., Pauli, J. N., & Peery, M. Z. (2018). Natal dispersal of tree sloths in a human-dominated landscape: Implications for tropical biodiversity conservation. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 55, 2253–2262.
- Giam, X., Hadiaty, R. K., Tan, H. H., Parenti, L. R., Wowor, D., Sauri, S., ... Wilcove, D. S. (2015). Mitigating the impact of oil-palm monoculture on freshwater fishes in Southeast Asia. *Conservation Biology*, 29, 1357–1367.
- Gillies, C. S., & St. Clair, C. C. (2008). Riparian corridors enhance movement of a forest specialist bird in fragmented tropical forest. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 105, 19774–19779.
- Gray, C. L., & Lewis, O. T. (2014). Do riparian forest fragments provide ecosystem services or disservices in surrounding oil palm plantations? *Basic and Applied Ecology*, 15, 693–700.
- Gray, C. L., Lewis, O. T., Chung, A. Y. C., & Fayle, T. M. (2015). Riparian reserves within oil palm plantations conserve logged forest leaf litter ant communities and maintain associated scavenging rates. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 52, 31–40.
- Gray, C. L., Simmons, B. I., Fayle, T. M., Mann, D. J., & Slade, E. M. (2016). Are riparian forest reserves sources of invertebrate biodiversity spillover and associated ecosystem functions in oil palm landscapes? *Biological Conservation*, 194, 176–183.
- Gray, R. E. J., Slade, E. M., Chung, A. Y. C., & Lewis, O. T. (2017). Riparian reserves in oil palm plantations may provide movement corridors for invertebrates. *bioRxiv*, 204990. <https://doi.org/10.1101/204990>
- Gray, C. L., Slade, E. M., Mann, D. J., & Lewis, O. T. (2014). Do riparian reserves support dung beetle biodiversity and ecosystem services in oil palm-dominated tropical landscapes? *Ecology and Evolution*, 4, 1049–1060.
- Gray, C., Slade, E., Mann, D., & Lewis, O. (2017). Designing oil palm landscapes to retain biodiversity using insights from a key ecological indicator group. *bioRxiv*, 204347. <https://doi.org/10.1101/204347>
- Griscom, H. P., Griscom, B. W., & Ashton, M. S. (2009). Forest regeneration from pasture in the dry tropics of Panama: Effects of cattle, exotic grass, and forested Riparia. *Restoration Ecology*, 17, 117–126.
- Harvey, C. A., Medina, A., Sánchez, D. M., Vilchez, S., Hernández, B., Saenz, J. C., ... Sinclair, F. L. (2006). Patterns of animal diversity in different forms of tree cover in agricultural landscapes. *Ecological Applications*, 16, 1986–1999.
- Heartsill-Scalley, T., & Aide, T. (2003). Riparian vegetation and stream condition in a tropical agriculture-secondary forest mosaic. *Ecological Applications*, 13, 225–234.
- Íñiguez-Armijos, C., Leiva, A., Frede, H., Hampel, H., & Breuer, L. (2014). Deforestation and benthic indicators: How much vegetation cover is needed to sustain healthy Andean streams? *PLoS ONE*, 9, e105869.
- Kachenchart, B., Jones, D. L., Gajasen, N., Edwards-Jones, G., & Limsakul, A. (2012). Seasonal nitrous oxide emissions from different land uses and their controlling factors in a tropical riparian ecosystem. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 158, 15–30.
- Keir, A. F., Pearson, R. G., & Congdon, R. A. (2015). Determinants of bird assemblage composition in riparian vegetation on sugarcane farms in the Queensland wet tropics. *Pacific Conservation Biology*, 21, 60–73.
- Keuroghlian, A., & Eaton, D. P. (2008). Importance of rare habitats and riparian zones in a tropical forest fragment: Preferential use by *Tayassu pecari*, a wide-ranging frugivore. *Journal of Zoology*, 275, 283–293.
- Konopik, O., Steffan-Dewenter, I., & Grafe, T. U. (2015). Effects of logging and oil palm expansion on stream frog communities on Borneo, Southeast Asia. *Biotropica*, 47, 636–643.
- Leal, C. G., Barlow, J., Gardner, T. A., Hughes, R. M., Leitão, R. P., Mac Nally, R., ... Pompeu, P. S. (2018). Is environmental legislation conserving tropical stream faunas? A large-scale assessment of local, riparian and catchment-scale influences on Amazonian fish. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 55, 1312–1326.
- Leal, C. G., Pompeu, P. S., Gardner, T. A., Leitão, R. P., Hughes, R. M., Kaufmann, P. R., ... Barlow, J. (2016). Multi-scale assessment of human-induced changes to Amazonian instream habitats. *Landscape Ecology*, 31, 1725–1745.
- Lees, A., & Peres, C. (2008). Conservation value of remnant riparian forest corridors of varying quality for Amazonian birds and mammals. *Conservation Biology*, 22, 439–449.
- Lorion, C. M., & Kennedy, B. P. (2009a). Riparian forest buffers mitigate the effects of deforestation on fish assemblages in tropical headwater streams. *Ecological Applications*, 19, 468–479.
- Lorion, C. M., & Kennedy, B. P. (2009b). Relationships between deforestation, riparian forest buffers and benthic macroinvertebrates in neotropical headwater streams. *Freshwater Biology*, 54, 165–180.
- Luke, S. H., Barclay, H., Bidin, K., Chey, V. K., Ewers, R. M., Foster, W. A., ... Aldridge, D. C. (2017). The effects of catchment and riparian forest quality on stream environmental conditions across a tropical rainforest and oil palm landscape in Malaysian Borneo. *Ecohydrology*, 10, e1827.
- Luke, S. H., Dow, R. A., Butler, S., Vun Khen, C., Aldridge, D. C., Foster, W. A., & Turner, E. C. (2017). The impacts of habitat disturbance on adult and larval dragonflies (Odonata) in rainforest streams in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. *Freshwater Biology*, 62, 491–506.
- Marczak, L. B., Sakamaki, T., Turvey, S. L., Deguise, I., Wood, S. L. R., & Richardson, J. S. (2010). Are forested buffers an effective conservation strategy for riparian fauna? An assessment using meta-analysis. *Ecological Applications*, 20, 126–134.
- Masese, F. O., Salcedo-Borda, J. S., Gettel, G. M., Irvine, K., & McClain, M. E. (2017). Influence of catchment land use and seasonality on dissolved organic matter composition and ecosystem metabolism in headwater streams of a Kenyan river. *Biogeochemistry*, 132, 1–22.
- Mayer, P. M., Reynolds, S. K., McCutchen, M. D., & Canfield, T. J. (2007). Meta-analysis of nitrogen removal in Riparian buffers. *Journal of Environmental Quality*, 36, 1172.
- Medina, A., Harvey, C. A., Merlo, D. S., Vilchez, S., & Hernández, B. (2007). Bat diversity and movement in an agricultural landscape in Matiguás, Nicaragua. *Biotropica*, 39, 120–128.
- Mendoza, S. V., Harvey, C. A., Sáenz, J. C., Casanoves, F., Carvajal, J. P., Villalobos, J. G., ... Sinclair, F. L. (2014). Consistency in bird use of tree cover across tropical agricultural landscapes. *Ecological Applications*, 24, 158–168.
- Metzger, J. P., Bernacci, L. C., & Goldenberg, R. (1997). Pattern of tree species diversity in riparian forest fragments of different widths (SE Brazil). *Plant Ecology*, 133, 135–152.
- Mitchell, S. L., Edwards, D. P., Bernard, H., Coomes, D., Jucker, T., Davies, Z. G., & Struebig, M. J. (2018). Riparian reserves help protect forest bird communities in oil palm dominated landscapes. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13233>
- Nagy, R. C., Porder, S., Neill, C., Brando, P., Quintino, R. M., & do Nascimento, S. A. (2015). Structure and composition of altered

- riparian forests in an agricultural Amazonian landscape. *Ecological Applications*, 25, 1725–1738.
- Niemeyer, R. J., Fremier, A. K., Heinse, R., Chávez, W., & DeClerck, F. A. J. (2014). Woody vegetation increases saturated hydraulic conductivity in dry tropical Nicaragua. *Vadose Zone Journal*, 13, vzj2013.01.0025. <https://doi.org/10.2136/vzj2013.01.0025>
- Nunes, S., Barlow, J., Gardner, T. A., Siqueira, J. V., Sales, M. R., & Souza, C. M. (2015). A 22 year assessment of deforestation and restoration in riparian forests in the eastern Brazilian Amazon. *Environmental Conservation*, 42, 193–203.
- Peh, K. S. H., Balmford, A., Bradbury, R. B., Brown, C., Butchart, S. H. M., Hughes, F. M. R., ... Birch, J. C., (2013). TESSA: A toolkit for rapid assessment of ecosystem services at sites of biodiversity conservation importance. *Ecosystem Services*, 5, 51–57.
- Proches, S. (2005). Landscape corridors: Possible dangers? *Science*, 310, 779–783.
- Pusey, B. J., & Arthington, A. H. (2003). Importance of the riparian zone to the conservation and management of freshwater fish: A review. *Marine & Freshwater Research*, 54, 1–16.
- Ragosta, G., Evensen, C., Atwill, E. R., Walker, M., Ticktin, T., Asquith, A., & Tate, K. W. (2011). Risk factors for elevated *Enterococcus* concentrations in a rural tropical island watershed. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 92, 1910–1915.
- Ricketts, T. H. (2004). Tropical forest fragments enhance pollinator activity in nearby coffee crops. *Conservation Biology*, 18, 1262–1271.
- Rodriguez-Mendoza, C., & Pineda, E. (2010). Importance of riparian remnants for frog species diversity in a highly fragmented rainforest. *Biology Letters*, 6, 781–784.
- Tabacchi, E., Lambs, L., Guillo, H., Planty-Tabacchi, A.-M., Muller, E., & Décamps, H. (2000). Impacts of riparian vegetation on hydrological processes. *Hydrological Processes*, 14, 2959–2976.
- Tanaka, M. O., de Souza, A. L. T., Moschini, L. E., & de Oliveira, A. K. (2016). Influence of watershed land use and riparian characteristics on biological indicators of stream water quality in southeastern Brazil. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 216, 333–339.
- Torres, P. J., & Ramirez, A. (2014). Land use effects on leaf litter breakdown in low-order streams draining a rapidly developing tropical watershed in Puerto Rico. *Revista de Biología Tropical*, 62, 129.
- Wantzen, K. M., Couto, E. G., Mund, E. E., Amorim, R. S. S., Siqueira, A., Tielbörger, K., & Seifan, M. (2012). Soil carbon stocks in stream-valley-ecosystems in the Brazilian Cerrado agroscape. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 151, 70–79.
- Zhang, W., Ricketts, T. H., Kremen, C., Carney, K., & Swinton, S. M. (2007). Ecosystem services and dis-services to agriculture. *Ecological Economics*, 64, 253–260.
- Zimbres, B., Peres, C. A., & Machado, R. B. (2017). Terrestrial mammal responses to habitat structure and quality of remnant riparian forests in an Amazonian cattle-ranching landscape. *Biological Conservation*, 206, 283–292.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

**How to cite this article:** Luke SH, Slade EM, Gray CL, et al. Riparian buffers in tropical agriculture: Scientific support, effectiveness and directions for policy. *J Appl Ecol*. 2019;56:85–92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13280>